

MAY 6, 1999

NEW DIRECTION FOR OUR NATION'S HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Speaker:** "The crisis in American health care is real and getting worse." Those words appeared in an editorial today in The Washington Post, written by two distinguished scholars, former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop and John C. Baldwin, vice president for health affairs at Dartmouth College.

□ I hope my colleagues will take a few minutes to read about the state of health care in our nation. Dr. Koop and Dr. Baldwin pointedly stress that universal access to health care must become a national commitment and will require a national investment.□ As important, they argue against the idea that health care should be treated as a commodity, saying that "(w)e must rid ourselves of the delusion that it is a business, like any other business."

At a time when 16 percent of Americans have no health insurance, health care costs are skyrocketing, and medical decisions are made by HMO executives beholden to shareholders, bold solutions are needed.□ As Dr. Koop and Dr. Baldwin State, "(o)ur problem is a failure of distribution, a failure to extend care to all of those who need it and a failure to recognize the importance of applying scientific rigor to the problems of broad-based health care delivery.□ If state-of-the art American medicine were offered to our citizens in a comprehensive way, our levels of public health would be unexcelled."□ □

They also recognize that we can not continue on our current path, to spend more than any other industrialized nation in the world while providing less.□ Correctly, they conclude that "the movement over the past few years to turn health care into a 'business' through health maintenance organizations and other stratagems has not worked to the satisfaction of most Americans."□ Indeed, it is time for a new direction.□